"I also want women to dress modestly, with decency and propriety, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or expensive clothes, but with good deeds, appropriate for women who profess to worship God."
1 Timothy 2:9-10

the hijab is **confidence**

> *"I don't wear it because I am oppressed, I wear it because I am empowered."*
>
> *Joumana, 23, Melbourne*

The Hijab enables women to have confidence in themselves as human beings. It increases the self-esteem of women by allowing them to focus on what really matters in life. The obsession with physical appearance can have dangerous and unhealthy consequences, as some women go to harmful lengths in order to feel accepted by an increasingly demanding society. The Hijab helps prevent such mental and physical harms associated with a lack of confidence, by limiting self-consciousness based on appearance.

the hijab is **NOT...**

- It does NOT hinder contribution to society.
- It is NOT a symbol of oppression.
- It is NOT required in places where there are only females and close male relatives.
- It is NOT a sign of female inferiority to men.
- It is NOT a means to restrict a woman's freedom to express her views and opinions.
- It is NOT a means to restrict women from pursuing an education or a suitable career.
- It is NOT a portable prison.
- It is NOT an act of defiance, confrontation or protest against non-Muslims.
- It is NOT something new – it has been practiced by many righteous women historically.
- It is NOT against community values - community values necessitate that people should not be judged by what they wear, nor discriminated against or mistreated, based on their choice of clothing or appearance.
- It is NOT worn with the intention of being intimidating or anti-social.

what **muslim women** say about **the hijab**

"I wore it at the age of 17 and now regret not wearing it earlier." - ***Faten, 27, Melbourne***

"It's not about being ready enough to wear it, it's about being fortunate enough to wear it." - ***Madina, 22, Melbourne***

"Wearing Hijab represents my freedom, my choice, not my oppression by the wants of men and media." - ***Nusaybah, 45, Melbourne***

"I like wearing the hijab because I'm doing it for the sake of Allah, and every time I think about that, it puts a smile on my face." - ***Aisha, 13, Melbourne***

"It allows me to realise my goals by having a career and going to school without worrying about the prying eyes of men. It forces people not to judge me based on my appearance, but on my thoughts and character." - ***Ms. Flavia, 22, USA***

"My body is my business, and I shouldn't have to defend what I wear to anyone. It is part of my religion, and the fact that I choose to wear it does not make me any less human." - ***Ms. Yasmin, 21, Australia***

conclusion

The Hijab is an act of obedience between the Muslim woman and her Creator. It is a source of empowerment and dignity, and millions of Muslim women around the world choose to wear the Hijab as part of their faith. Far from being oppressive, the Hijab is an act of liberation, purity and most importantly, belief. Respect for women is an important aspect of Islamic teachings, and this is illustrated via the Hijab.

True equality will occur when women do not need to display themselves to be valued nor defend their decision to keep their bodies to themselves.

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the **hijab**

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what is the **hijab?**

Muslim males are also required to dress in loose and unrevealing clothing in order to maintain their modesty and dignity.

The word Hijab comes from the Arabic root word 'Hajaba', which means to conceal or cover. In an Islamic context, Hijab refers to the dress code required for Muslim females who have reached puberty. Hijab is the requirement of covering or veiling the entire body with the exception of the face and hands. Some also choose to cover their face and hands and this is referred to as Burqa or Niqab. The Hijab is not required in situations where there are only females and certain male relatives present. However, hijab is not just about outer appearances; it is also about noble speech, modesty, and dignified conduct. These righteous manners are also required of men.

the hijab is **obedience**

Although there are many benefits of Hijab, it is first and foremost a commandment from God. Therefore, wearing it is an act of faith and obedience to The Creator, as mentioned in the Quran:

"Tell the believing women to draw their outer garments around them (when they go out or are among men)." Quran 33:59

The Hijab in no way suggests that women are inferior to men.

God, the All-Wise, knows what is best for His creation, and has therefore provided guidance in order to benefit humankind. The wearing of hijab, just like any other act of obedience to The Creator, brings one closer to their Lord and helps bring a sense of satisfaction and contentment to the person wearing it.

the hijab is **modesty**

Islam promotes modesty and decency and seeks to minimise immorality within society. The Hijab, amongst other things, helps attain this goal.

"Say to the believing men that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty: That is purer for them; and Allah is well acquainted with all that they do. And say to the believing women that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty. They should not display their beauty except that which is apparent; that they should draw their veils over their chests and not display their beauty..." Quran 24:30-31

Note that in the above verses, it is men who are addressed first in regards to lowering their gaze and guarding their modesty. This counters the claim that all responsibility for such modesty is shouldered by women.

While Islam discourages public displays of immodest dress and sexual behavior, being a practical religion, Islam encourages love, affection and intimacy between married couples in private.

the hijab is **protection**

The wisdom behind the Hijab is to minimise sexual enticement and moral degradation in society as much as possible for both men and women. The Hijab helps protect men, women and society by creating stability in both families and communities in a number of ways.

- Shields from unwanted advances.
- Shields women from perverted looks and superficial scrutiny.
- May help reduce the likelihood of sexual assaults against women.
- Shields from sexual exploitation of women based on appearance.
- Shields from temptations and harmful desires

the hijab is **dignity**

The Hijab promotes a woman's femininity rather than suppressing it, and grants women dignity and self-respect for who they are, as opposed to being judged by superficial standards, such as appearance. This grants women the power to shape their own dignity via more meaningful standards, such as righteousness, knowledge and societal contribution, rather than having a consumer society dictate their worth through material means, such as how they look or how much money they earn.

In the sight of God, men and women do not have to be identical in order to be equal, and this is reflected in the different roles and responsibilities which apply to each.

Nobel Peace Prize winner, Tawakkul Karman, 'The mother of Yemen's revolution,' when asked about her Hijab by journalists and how it is not proportionate with her level of intellect and education, replied:

"Man in early times was almost naked, and as his intellect evolved he started wearing clothes. What I am today and what I'm wearing represents the highest level of thought and civilization that man has achieved, and is not regressive. It's the removal of clothes again that is a regression back to the ancient times."

the hijab is **respect**

In a number of societies today, many women are taught from early childhood that their worth is proportional to their attractiveness. They are compelled to follow unrealistic and demeaning standards of beauty in order to satisfy unreasonable peer pressure and community expectations. In such a superficial environment, where so much emphasis is placed on external beauty, the internal beauty of the individual counts for very little.

Islam however, teaches that a woman is to be respected according to her virtuous character and actions rather than by her looks or physical features, of which she has little or no control. She does not have to use her body and charms to gain recognition or acceptance in society, as the Hijab directs self-worth away from appearance and onto qualities such as piety, virtue, modesty and intellect – attributes which are more equally accessible to all.

Every woman who wears a hijab or burqa is a unique individual, and it is unfair and inaccurate to make a sweeping judgement about all such women based on one item of clothing they have in common.

the hijab in **the bible**

The Hijab is not something new. Muslim women follow the example of righteous women in the past such as Mary, the mother of Jesus. Some of the evidence from the bible includes the following two verses.

"And every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head." 1 Corinthians 11:3-6.